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THE AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON 13, D. C.

July 15, 1953

Dear David: Personal and Confidential

I understand from Jim that you were recently in this country while I was in the west. Sorry to have missed you because I wanted to continue the conversation we had about the Red Cross. At that time I had nothing specific in mind but now I have.

After serving as President of the Red Cross for some two and a half years I have come to some rather definite conclusions about the most desirable set-up for the top-level management. This I have discussed with some of the key members of the Board of Governors and with President Eisenhower when he asked me to accept a reappointment of my term which recently expired.

To give you a little background:

At the time of the reorganization of the Red Cross in 1947 the revision in the Charter provided, amongst other things, that one of the appointees of the President of the United States should be designated as the "principal" officer with such duties and title as the Board of Governors might specify. This was done to permit flexibility. At the present time the title of the principal officer is "President" and his duties are to be "the representative of the corporation in its relation with public and private agencies and the public at large. He shall be responsible for communicating to the Executive Vice President the policies and programs adopted or approved by the Board of Governors and for reporting to the Board as to the conduct and management of the affairs of the entire organization**********." The by-laws also provide for an Executive Vice President who is elected by the Board upon nomination of the President, (Red Cross) and he is the chief administrative officer. While this arrangement is a step in the right direction it does not fully fill the bill according to my way of thinking. In the first place, although the duties as described in the By-laws are specific, yet, for a variety of reasons, among them being habit, the President is still looked to by the public and the Chapters as responsible for everything. In the second place, it is essential to my mind that the "principal officer" should be a volunteer. It will be increasingly difficult to find a man who can serve as a volunteer and devote the time and attention necessary to the job. For example, for the first two years of my tenure I spent at least 80% of my time on Red Cross, and now I should say well over 50%. To inject a personal element, this I can no longer do and, confidentially, I so told President Eisenhower. However, he asked me to continue which I agreed to do with the understanding that if in six months or a year other plans could not be developed and put into execution I could come back to him. Now for the solution:

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First, the Board of Governors shall designate the "principal" officer with a new title of "Chairman" of Red Cross with duties similar to those at present. This man to be a volunteer.

Second, designate the President to be the chief executive officer, to be elected by the Board on nomination by the Chairman. This man to be compensated within reason if necessary.

Third, to retain the title of Executive Vice President, the incumbent to be elected by the Board on nomination by the President. His duties shall consist of such administrative matters as may be delegated to him by the President. This man is presently Nicholson, and could probably continue to be chosen from Red Cross career personnel.

This is the plan which the key members of the Board and President Eisenhower approved in principle. The only thing remaining before submitting it to the full Board for approval is to find a man who would be willing to be the President and chief executive officer of the Red Cross.

I am very hopeful, and my associates likewise, that you will be willing to favorably consider the position and permit me to nominate you for the Presidency. I fully believe that with the scope and responsibility of Red Cross and its unique position as a quasi-governmental agency it will be one of the most important posts in the field of public service. As you well know, the Red Cross is a fascinating subject. In the past few years really dramatic steps have been taken to fairly establish it as the primary organization of the people to help other people. The old volunteer spirit is again flourishing and its leadership starting with the Board of Governors and going down through the Chapters is improving constantly. The administrative procedures have been streamlined and there is now a sense of getting the job done rather than how it shall be done. There is, of course, plenty left to be done to maintain the march of progress. With your knowledge of Red Cross and your experience in it and because of the high esteem by which you are held by one and all, and because there is nobody I would rather work with, I think we all could have a lot of fun as well as satisfaction in working together. I only wish we could have gotten together to talk this out because you will probably have a number of questions which I have not been able to anticipate in this letter. I do trust that you will not make a snap answer unless it is "yes" until we have had a chance to talk. If the idea appeals to you at all I can call you on the phone or perhaps you are returning briefly in the near future. In any event, please let me have a cable from you to 59 Wall Street, New York, letting me know that you are interested in developing the idea further. I would be fully prepared to wait until, say October when I understand you are planning to come back for good if there is a good chance that your final response would be favorable.

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This letter is long enough so I will close for now with all of the best.

As ever,

Averell Harriman

Honorable David K. E. Bruce
American Embassy
Paris, France

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